

# 135 Group offers care for caregivers

YOUR COMMUNITY NEWS

## Alzheimer's support available

BY JAMIE MCGEE  
*The Post and Courier*

GOOSE CREEK — Sharon Brown remembers when she got the call from the police. Her parents had gotten lost on the way to the grocery in northern Virginia and ended up in Baltimore, going the wrong way in a road tunnel.

Her father suffered from dementia and her mother from Alzheimer's disease. Brown had agreed to not send them to assisted living, but something had to change.

She quit her job as a nurse and cared for them full-time. When the family moved to Goose Creek, her parents moved in with her family. "It was overwhelming," she said. "It's very tough and it's constant."

Brown did not want to quit working, but as more and more incidents happened, she knew she did not have a choice. Even then, she felt like she had a 24-hour-a-day job. Her mother, who died last year, would often wake in the night and Brown would have to help her.

"Going to the grocery takes two or three times longer," she said, describing running errands with her

loved ones. Don Bagwell, community outreach coordinator of The Ark, said so many people from the region were coming to their Summerville and St. George centers, that they decided to expand. They are also laying the groundwork for support groups in St. Stephen and Strawberry, and they hope to reach more areas in coming years.

Several projects are under way:

► **Adult Respite Care** gives caretakers a break and allows them to have some personal time. At the same time, their family members can interact with others in similar conditions.

► **Support groups** give caregivers coping skills by allowing them to

talk about their frustrations and share helpful tips.

► **Caregiver Consultation** helps families set priorities and learn techniques on how to manage and improve the quality of life for the family member with memory loss and for themselves.

► **Corporate Caregiver** is a branch of The Ark that partners with local businesses to help caregivers who are balancing their family responsibilities with their jobs.

The Goose Creek program will start with support groups and expand from there, but respite care will be available during the sessions, Bagwell said.

Brown went to The Ark in Summerville for help as soon as her family moved to Goose Creek and described the group as a "godsend."

Through the respite program, she is able to run errands and have some relief from her caretaking duties. She has also picked up tips

that have helped with everyday tasks, such as bathing or improving sleep time. Through The Ark, she has gotten involved in research programs to help younger generations cope with memory loss.

"I truly could not have made it without the support group and the help they gave me," she said.

### If you go

The Alzheimer's support group will meet every fourth Thursday of the month 10 a.m.-12 p.m. at Pinewood House, 101 Centennial Blvd. in Crowfield Plantation.

Facilitators include Tiffany Glisson, family caregiver advocate with the Trident Area Agency on Aging, and Don Bagwell, community outreach coordinator with The Ark.

The Goose Creek Support Group is affiliated with the Alzheimer's Association, which offers grants for respite care while caregivers attend. For more information about the group, call Bagwell at 832-2357 or Glisson at 554-2278.

### Getting started

The Ark helps communities build their own support systems, but provides the framework to help get started including feedback, training, materials, advice and technical direction.

For more information about building a support group in your area, call Don Bagwell at 832-2357 or e-mail DonBagwell@sc.rr.com

father. "Mobility is an issue and you have to keep your eyes on him."

There are thousands of families in the area who face similar situations that are often accompanied by strong feelings of guilt, stress, powerlessness and a sense of isolation.

The Ark, a Summerville-based respite care program, is expanding its Neighborhood Outreach Alzheimer's Help, or NOAH, to Goose Creek to help more people in rural areas take care of their

